

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA
Ontario Provincial Council
71st Annual Convention
Oral Report

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Title of Mary: Mother Most Sorrowful

Inspired by the Spirit, members of the St. Catharines Diocesan Council have responded to God's call with love and compassion in helping to address the issue of homelessness.

During the month of October, our Diocesan Council initiated a "Soctober" event. Members of parish councils collected socks for those less fortunate in our communities. Some Councils also reached out asking their parishioners to participate. A total of over 5,600 pairs of socks were collected and donated to programs, organizations and/or shelters such as: The Hope Centre, Out of the Cold, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society located throughout the four regions of our Diocese.

As the cold winter season arrived, our Diocesan Council registered as a team to participate in the "Coldest Night of the Year Walk", a walk that took place on February 24th in different cities throughout Canada. Our team consisting of nine members, small but mighty, walked 2 km at the St. Catharines location. This site was hosted by the organization 'Start Me Up Niagara'. All funds raised helped to support this organization's work with individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty. This was the first time our Diocesan team was entered in this walk and finished in the top 10 raising a total of \$3,032.00. Not only was this event an opportunity to assist our brothers and sisters in Christ, but a wonderful evening of fellowship and coming together with those in our community.

As women of faith, members kept the issue of homelessness close in prayer as we gathered for our council meetings, annual retreat, holy hour, mass, conferences and convention.

As women of action, many members offered their time and talents in assisting the homeless by volunteering in soup kitchens and shelters, always welcoming them with love.

Most recently at our Diocesan Convention in May, guest speaker Deacon Maurice Prindiville spoke on his "ministry to people without homes" offering us constructive ways to address this issue. *He informed us that "Harm Reduction and Social Reform are two different ways of working on homelessness; both are good. Do both, he said, but focus on one at a time. And, before going all gung-ho to reform society.... meet people who are homeless: hear their stories, share their lives. Respecting the person is the core of harm reduction."* Deacon Maurice also provided a resource list to help us educate ourselves about the history, the issues and best practices.

As I pray the devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows meditating on the seven sorrows that pierced Mary's heart, I recall the second sorrow, The Flight into Egypt: Joseph, Mary and Jesus fleeing to find a "home" a place to rest. They too experienced hardship, uncertainty, and fear, but relied and trusted in God.

Mary, Most Sorrowful Mother, full of boundless compassion, intercede for all who are without homes that they may turn to God with trust. Pray for us so that we may continue to be the hands and feet of your Son, Jesus Christ and serve our brothers and sisters with great love and compassion.